Long-term care workers % of total workforce 2019

Long-term care (LTC) workforce expanded by one third from 2009 to 2019: 6.3 million

More older workers (38% 50+ vs 33%), and larger increase (+10% vs 7%)

Stable: largely female workforce (81%)

Large gaps in access to LTC, especially in lowest income countries (Eurofound, 2020)

44 million frequent informal carers to older or disabled relatives/friends (EQLS)

Female workers, carers, users: highly relevant for EU’s gender strategy


Pay: social services (% of national average) 2018

Pay often near minimum wage, and sensitive to it

Lowest:
• (social) carers
• assistant nurses

Better paid professions: specialised nurses, social workers, therapists

Often excluded from the data/agreements:
• domestic LTC workers


42% work part-time

More than in other sectors, LTC workers would like to work more hours (EWCS)

23% could not find a full-time job

Such reasons depend on working conditions, support services

Sustainable working conditions essential

- **Job Quality Index**
  - Worse: working time quality, job intensity, monthly earnings, physical environment, social environment
  - Slightly better (but worse than healthcare): job prospects, skills and discretion

- **Specific working conditions challenges:**
  - Little influence on working time, alternating shift work and short notice work
  - Exposed to adverse social behaviour at work (mental health challenges, in growing sector)
  - Lifting or moving people
  - Working with infectious materials, but less informed about health and safety

Home care

• Policy emphasis on enabling longer lives at home. EPSR: ‘in particular home-care and community-based services’. COVID-19 may accelerate move to home/community care [e.g. reports of increased demand for platform home care work in ES*]
  – Challenge: home as work environment is hard to regulate and control. Training, technology and better staffing can help
  – Pockets of more precarious forms of self-employment (low in LTC overall, but somewhat more temporary contracts in LTC) and platform work.

• Domestic care work: often under inspectorates’ radar, concentration undeclared work, etc.
  – ILO 2011 ‘Domestic Workers Convention’ ratified by DE, IE, IT, BE, FI, PT, SE

• Live-in care more common in AT, CY, DE, GR, ES, IT, MT. Large working conditions challenges
  – Regularise (AT, IT collective agreement & COVID support measure, CY/MT residence permit procedure)
  – But, rarely necessary if access to flexible, high-quality LTC, with public support restricted to declared care.

Broader message (also in residential care, procurement): use public leverage more effectively

*Eurofound (forthcoming), The impact of COVID on living conditions of older people and their care needs.
Feeling always doing useful work

• Nourish by: more time with service users, fewer administrative tasks, greater autonomy and increased professionalism, also contributing to better services.

For more information, data and findings

Contact:
Hans.Dubois@eurofound.europa.eu